



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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Testimony before the  
Judiciary Committee  
on

S.B. 899 An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection Under  
The Constitution of the State for Same-Sex Couples  
March 6, 2009

The Connecticut Catholic Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, has for many years come before this committee to express its profound opposition to the legal recognition of same-sex civil unions and marriages within our state. The Conference's opposition to legal recognition of these forms of relationship was based not only on the religious teachings of the Catholic Church, but also out of the church's concern for the potentially negative sociological impact such relationships may eventually have on society.

Despite the October 2008 Connecticut Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage, the Catholic Church in Connecticut still holds firm to its opposition to such unions. The State Supreme Court may have provided the advocates of same-sex marriage a civil victory, but it did not provide a victory over the hearts and minds of many people within our state who, in obedience to their religious beliefs, will never fully accept this civil institution. This committee, in codifying the Kerrigan ruling through S.B. 899, needs to address this profound conflict between civil law and the deeply held religious beliefs of many of the citizens within our state.

The Catholic Conference encourages this committee not to view this conflict as one driven by hate, but by sincere and faith driven beliefs held by many good people within our state. Even the Supreme Court recognized this in the Kerrigan decision when they stated "same-sex marriage is a subject about which persons of good will reasonably and sincerely disagree." (footnote 79 of majority decision) This committee should uphold the proud tradition our state has in protecting religious liberty as reflected in the state Constitution and numerous areas within our state statutes. The state should not force individuals or certain organizations, through punitive or coercive actions, to violate a deeply held religious belief.

To this end, the Conference recommends that Section 7 of this proposed legislation, which exempts clergy members from the necessity to perform same-sex marriages, be expanded and be made more inclusive. Any person, not just clergy, authorized to perform marriages under state statute 46b-22 should not be required to perform a marriage in violation of their free exercise of religion. For example, a Catholic Justice of the Peace should not be forced to relinquish their office because they will not perform a same-sex marriage in direct violation of their faith. Especially, when there is a significant number of other Justices of the Peace who would provide this service.

In addition, Section 7 should prohibit any person, such as a wedding photographer, or religious affiliated organizations and charities, from being coerced to comply or cooperate with the new public policy of the state recognizing marriage between persons of the same sex, if it would violate their religious tenets.

A situation has been created by the Kerrigan decision where state policy seriously conflicts with the religious beliefs of a large number of the citizens of the state. The Catholic Conference asks this committee to recognize and address this conflict as it moves to consider S.B.899. It asks this committee to respect our state's proud history of protecting religious freedom

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Reynolds", written in a cursive style.

Deacon David Reynolds  
Legislative Liaison